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ABSTRACT

Data derived from heads of households (50% American Indian, 10% black and 40%white) living in a large (a 25% sample) and a small rural (a 50% sample, Louisiana community were used in conjunction with a pictorial survey of the respondents' houses to evaluate satisfaction with housing in terms of both objective and subjective housing indicators. The variables employed were: subjective housing satisfaction; outsider housing ratings; objective housing characteristics (convenience items, number of rooms, number of persons per room, and residence type); resident characteristics (age, income, education, sex, and race); other subjective evaluation (best possible vs worst possible situation and a series of 3 community satisfaction scales based upon responses to a 21-item questionnaire re respondent's community). Some findings were: correlations between age and residence satisfaction, between income and education and outward appearance of residence, between race and satisfaction (non-whites were less satisfied with their housing), between housing appearance and race, and between satisfaction with housing and satisfaction with community services and social environment; low correlation between outsider housing scores and other subjective factors; no correlation between housing satisfaction and physical environment and between sex and housing satisfaction. It was concluded that if the goals of housing policy include improved quality of life, simple objective measures of housing quality provide insufficient data. (JC)

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DEFINITIONS OF HOUSING SITUATIONS OUTSIDERS VS. INSIDERS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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INTRODUCTION

According to testimony before Congress and based upon research of the First National Rural Housing Conference, two-thirds of the substandard housing in the U. S. is in small towns and rural areas, although those same areas contain only 30% of the population. This announcement has been received with much skepticism which tends to reflect the nature of social belief when a fact is revealed which runs contrary to the "commonsense" of the community. As a result the housing need in small towns and rural areas goes largely unmet.

Studies on quality of housing and conditions are quite deficient. Yet housing goals and policy are still being established and executed on some basis. Important as objective indicators are in gaining insight into housing problems, they are not complete; hence there has been a great deal of recent focus in acknowledging and substantiating the importance of subjective indicators.

The focus on housing in this paper stems from our interest and research in community satisfaction (Deseran, et al, 1976; Deseran and Stokley, 1976). Recent research in this area suggests that community satisfaction offers a potential conceptual bridge between objective and subjective indicators of social reality (i.e., Rojek et al, 1975; Marans and Rodgers, 1975; Campbell et al, 1976). Two of these studies will be briefly examined to provide insight into this area of research.

Rojek et al (1975) argue that "measures of community satisfaction may prove to be a valuable contribution toward the development of multifaceted social indicators" (p. 177). However their presentation remains on the level of community satisfaction being defined largely in operational terms and focuses primarily on the determinants of satisfaction. Marans and Rodgers (1975) also emphasize determinants, but they provide some conceptual discussion of the nature of satisfaction itself. They argue that satisfaction is dependent both upon the objective circumstances in which an individual finds himself and upon "a whole set of values, attitudes, and expectations that one brings into the situation" (p.302).

Marans and Rodgers' conceptual model assumes that satisfaction may diverge from feelings of happiness. This is in part because cognitive standards of comparison are brought to bear by the actor in forming his/her evaluation. In particular, satisfactions are seen as a product of comparisons between assessments of the life situations in which individuals find themselves and their internal standards derived from past experience and observation. Therefore, one may find circumstances where one's degree of happiness in general is not necessarily correspondent to his or her satisfaction with a particular situation. We are particularly interested in the notion that satisfaction with community may well be closely related with one's own family situation, housing circumstances, etc. Particularly the focus of this paper will

be upon housing and satisfaction with it.

It is our purpose to examine rural housing from both objective (outsider) and subjective (insider) points of view. Towards this end, this paper 1) briefly reviews relevant literature regarding housing satisfaction, 2) specifies our own approach to the problem of subjective and objective indicators, 3) reports findings from a study conducted in two rural Southern Louisiana communities where objective criteria have been applied to an assessment of local housing conditions along with residents' own assessments of their housing situations, and 4) discusses the results, offering suggestions for future housing research.

COMMUNITY AND HOUSING SATISFACTION

During the past decade there have been a number of empirical studies which have dealt with peoples' attitudes towards communities, residential areas, neighborhoods, and housing satisfaction. Attitudes about present living situations have been determined indirectly by asking people how they feel or what they like or dislike about their home, neighborhood, or community.

The most salient conclusions that can be drawn from these studies can be briefly summarized. Most people tend to be fairly satisfied with the residential environment in which they live. The social setting, including interpersonal relations and type of housing, are salient factors in individuals' level of satisfaction with the community. Other

important factors related to general satisfaction include the physical conditions of the residential environment, the convenience of public and private facilities and services, the size of one's dwelling, the presence of such conditions as space, quiet, and safety of surroundings (Marans and Rodgers, 1975; Campbell et al, 1976). However, the most immediate aspect of the residential environment for the individual and the one with which she or he is most closely identified is the private dwelling unit, be that a single-family house, apartment, mobile home, or whatever.

Marans and Rodgers (1975) note that there is available information regarding the "objective" indicators of the situation (type of structure, number of rooms, owned vs. rented, etc.) underlying the domain of experience which can be used as a starting point for the consideration of subjective indicators (perceptions, assessments, satisfactions) that will grant us some understanding of the level of satisfaction. The results of their findings regarding housing satisfaction can be noted briefly. The patterns of satisfaction with housing expressed by different kinds of people (defined by race, age income, etc.) are similar to patterns related to satisfaction with community and neighborhood. Nonwhites are less satisfied with housing than are whites; satisfaction is lowest for those in the lower middle income group; and satisfaction increases with age and with length of residence in one's present house or community. Most of the relation-

snips between personal characteristics and housing satisfaction is mediated by the assessments of specific housing characteristics (noted as objective indicators previously) (Campbell et al, 1976).

In a 1963 study of 3,500 households in 18 communities, the variables of household composition, housing conditions, length of occupancy, length of residency in community, etc. were strongly related to income or education in terms of a higher level of satisfaction (Virirakis et al, 1970). A follow-up report in 1972 focused more upon the effect of household composition, housing, length of house occupancy and residence in the community, and presence of friends or relatives in the community. The findings suggest that 1) residents in homes with greater density were more critical of their communities, 2) home owners were no more satisfied with their communities than were non-home owners, 3) length of residence in both the house and community were not consistently correlated with satisfaction with the community, and 4) perhaps the presence of relatives in the community tends to result in a lower level of satisfactoriness, while the presence of friends increases the level of satisfactoriness.

Angrist (1974), in summarizing sociological and psychological studies of subjective indicators of well-being, happiness, and satisfaction, emphasizes the differential distribution of subjective states of happiness or satisfaction.

For example, Bradburn's (1969) study shows that happiness is less abundant among those with objective difficulties (poverty, poor health, lack of education) than those who do not experience such problems. Cantril (1965), measuring well-being in terms of a self-anchoring striving scale, found subjective differences in aspirations cross-culturally.

Strumpel (1971) and Campbell and Converse (1972) have found that subjective evaluations of present and future situations are influenced by race, income, and education. Rossi (1972) noted that housing is more important as a source of satisfaction than as a shaper of individuals' lives. A sense of well-being is supposedly enhanced by familiar people and living environment (Fried, 1963; Shelley and Adelbery, 1969). And race has been shown to affect satisfaction with housing or neighborhood services where nonwhites who feel deprived relative to whites may be more dissatisfied (Campbell and Converse, 1972; Hyman, 1972).

The above sampling of studies reveals a variety of conceptions of the nature and causes of subjective states of people. The difficulty of isolating even a few pertinent factors which might provide an adequate link between objective and subjective states of reality is apparent. However, one item which tends to recur in the literature is housing. The walls, floors, and roof which daily shelter an individual cannot help but continuously intrude into one's life-space. The question, it seems, is not whether housing is

important to an individual's state of well-being, satisfaction, or whatever; the question is how does housing, as an obtrusive thing in an individual's immediate living environment, influence the evaluative processes? And perhaps just as important, what has the greatest effect: the objective state of the house, or particular circumstances of the occupant?

Whereas indicators of housing quality may appear to be simple, unambiguous, and accurate, Marcuse (1971) contends that this is not the case. His criticisms are threefold: first, existing indicators which rely on condition of structure, plumbing facilities, overcrowding, rent, etc. (objective) do not seem to correlate to people's subjective reaction to their housing situation; second, the Census Bureau has acknowledged serious shortcomings in the accuracy, if not meaningfulness of their data on housing; third, the few theoretical attempts to deal with constructing new indicators are too limited in their efforts to serve as indicators of overall residential living quality. Marcuse suggests a theoretical formulation using social indicators to develop new effective housing indicators.

Marcuse states that the "use of social indicators offers one approach to a reformulation of national housing goals." In citing major nationwide housing data sources (U. S. Census 1960; International Housing Productivity Study at UCLA; HUD data; Douglas and Kaiser Commissions), he critically notes that they have evolved only "statistical definitions" regarding

housing conditions. The social indicator movement, Marcuse claims, has not questioned to a strong degree the existing measures of housing conditions in terms of their significance and/or omission of certain factors. These previous attempts (primarily objective indicators) are inadequate indicators, and yet they have helped determine goals for housing policy (1971: 197-203).

Agreeing with Marcuse's concern with the inadequacy of current indicators of housing, we have explored some of these difficulties in our own research. As shown in the following section, our findings, although not conclusive, allow us to make some suggestions about the relationships between objective and subjective aspects of housing.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this research was gathered during the summer of 1976 from two communities in Southern Louisiana. Heads of households or their spouses were interviewed concerning such things as satisfaction with the community, community services, leisure time activities, housing, medical care, etc.

The sample was derived by dividing both communities into equal population segments in order to obtain a 50% sample of households in the smaller community and a 25% sample in the larger community. Every other household was interviewed in one community and every fourth house in the second.

Interviewers were selected from the communities studied

because of the large number of residents who spoke only Cajun French. Despite our reservations about using indigenous interviewers, we found them to be conscientious, accurate, and able to gain access where outsiders may have been rejected. Over all, we felt that the advantages gained by using such interviewers by far outweighed the obvious disadvantages. In addition to using local interviewers, we attempted to treat each respondent as a "consultant" and paid him or her two dollars for the information we gained. Although the two dollars meant little in terms of buying power, it became evident that the interviewees were appreciative.

In addition to the survey questionnaires, a pictorial survey of the houses of the respondents was conducted. This technique focused on the condition of housing in precise terms. Such a survey provides additional data and knowledge based on relatively structured and objective criteria. The pictorial technique was patterned after a similar study conducted by the Texas Department of Community Affairs financed in part through a planning grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (1972).

Utilizing the pictures provided by the Texas housing report, evaluation of housing conditions was conducted. The technique requires the evaluator to score the elements of housing units by matching the photograph most nearly like the condition of the element being evaluated. There were ten areas to be evaluated on a scale of one to seven, one

representing the best and seven the worst. The conditions of the houses evaluated were: appearance of the neighborhood, appearance of boundary of property, appearance of lawn and shrubs, condition of roof, condition of exterior wall surfaces, condition of porch (if any) and front entryway, condition of doors and trim around doors, and condition of windows and trim around windows. Evidence of electricity as well as evidence of plumbing were rated as either present (1) or absent (7). These evaluations were based upon wooden or brick homes and since part of the sample lived in mobile homes, it was necessary to devise a similar rating scheme for mobile homes. Based upon the individual item scores, overall mean scores were computed for each dwelling, producing an "objective" housing scale.

THE VARIABLES

Preliminary analysis of the data involves the assessment of several categories of factors potentially related to housing evaluation. At this stage of our research, we have used simple statistical techniques to test for differences or measure associations between the various factors. The categories of variables and a brief description of each variable follow.

1. Subjective Housing Satisfaction. Resident's satisfaction with his or her house is derived from an interview item: "In general, how satisfied are you with your home?" Answers range from "very satisfied" to very dissatisfied."

In addition to the scaled satisfaction item, subjects were asked if they would move to a better dwelling if provided. It was felt that such a question would be an indication of residents' general satisfaction with or attachment to their present home. We have treated this as a dichotomous variable based upon a "yes" or "no" response.

2. Outsider Housing Ratings. This variable was operationalized, as mentioned earlier, from a scale based upon a pictorial assessment of the physical condition of the dwelling unit and the surrounding area. Although the rating is not a direct indicator of an outsider's estimates of the level of residents' satisfaction, it is assumed that the lower the physical quality of the house -- based upon visual inspection -- the lower would be the residents' satisfaction with the house.

3. Objective Housing Characteristics. A number of items have been selected as objective indicators of housing: (1) the presence or absence of certain convenience items (air conditioning, hot water heater, and central heating -- these particular items were selected largely because there were a sufficient number of residents lacking these items to warrant statistical comparisons), (2) the number of rooms in a house, (3) the average number of persons per room, and (4) the type of residence (i.e., mobile home or house).

4. Resident Characteristics. Five person-related characteristics have been included as possible factors

influencing resident satisfaction with housing: age, income, education, sex, and race. Race is of particular interest in this study because a large proportion of the residents of the communities are Indian.

5. Other Subjective Evaluations. In order to explore the relationship between housing satisfaction and other dimensions of community life, we have included in our analysis two additional subjective indicators. First, related to family situation, we asked respondents to "place" their family on a ten-rung ladder where the top rung represented the best possible situation a family could find itself in, and the bottom rung the worst possible situation. The number of the rung chosen represents the subject's definition of his or her family situation. Second, we have constructed a series of three community satisfaction scales based upon responses to a twenty-one item battery of questions about the respondent's community. Factor analysis of the items resulted in three dimensions of community satisfaction which we have labeled community services, physical environment, and social environment (see Deseran and Stokley, 1976 for a detailed discussion of the derivation of these scales).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 reports findings comparing "outsider" housing assessments with resident satisfaction with housing as affected by objective indicators. As can beer easily seen, the objective indicators(i.e., availability of certain conveniences, type of residence, number of rooms, and crowding) have a greater impact on outsider housing evaluations than upon resident satisfaction. The only variable not affecting outsider scores on housing is the number of rooms in a house. evidently, there is no linear relationship between the size of dwelling unit (as operationalized by number of rooms) and its visual quality. On the other hand, number of rooms and crowding were related to resident satisfaction with housing ($p<.01$ for r in both cases) while none of the other objective indicators resulted in major impacts.

[Table 1 about here]

These findings suggest that certain objective indicators can be confidently associated with physical characteristics of housing. In a sense, these data lend empirical validity to the pictoral assessment techniques used in this study. At the same time, these data support our earlier mentioned argument that outsider assessments of housing conditions may not necessarily result in accurate imputations of subjective resident responses to housing conditions. Although the absence

of such conveniences as air conditioning, central heat, or hot water, or living in a trailor instead of a house, may be pretty good clues to the condition of the house, such indicators may not be related to an individual's evaluation of his own living situation.

The data pertaining to individual characteristics provides some interesting findings (Tables . and 3,. Age, while correlating with housing satisfa tion, apparently has little effect on the ou wardly appearing condition of residences. This suggests that as one gets older satisfaction with one's dwelling increases regardless of the outward appearance. The relationship between age and satisfaction with living environments has been noted previously(Marans and Rodgers, 1975; Rojek et al, 1976).

Income and education, interestingly, do not appear to effect resident assessments of their housing situation, but are related to the outward appearance of the residence. The higher the amount of education or income(which are obviously interrelated), the more positive the outsider housing assessment(Note: the lower the score the higher the housing quality--thus, the negative correlation coefficients reported in the tables).

Although there may be some justification to hypothesize that sex would make a difference in perceptions of housing, our findings offer no support. The mean satisfaction scores between sexes, while reflecting a slight negative direction for women, are not statistically significant.

[Table 2 about here]

Race is of particular interest in this study. One of the unique features of the communities studied is the racial composition, with approximately fifty percent of the households being Indian, ten percent Black, and the remainder White. The findings shown in Table 3 indicate that this variable does have an influence both on the condition of housing and reported satisfaction with housing. (It should be noted that there is a general tendancy for all subjects of be satisfied with their homes-- 53% of all respondents indicated that they were "very satisfied" with their homes-- and that our analysis is largely based upon comparing those who are very satisfied with those who are less than very satisfied). Whereas 65.9% of the White households reported to be very satisfied with their dwellings, only 46.6% and 35.3% of the Indian and Black households respectively indicated such high satisfaction. These findings suggest that even with a relatively high overall rate of satisfaction, non-White residents are noticeably less satisfied with their housing situation. These results support other research efforts using race as a variable(Marans and Rodgers, 1975; Campbell et al, 1976; Cantril, 1965; Strumpel, 1971; and Campbell and Converse, 1972).

[Table 3 about here]

Race also appears to be an indicator of the outward appearance of housing. While 50.6% of the White households were rated high on the "outsider" rating scale, 17.2% of the Indian and only 5.9% of the Black residences were so rated. Of course, because there is an evident relationship between such factors as education/income and race, we are not necessarily arguing that race, isolated from other socio-economic variables, is in itself a causal factor. But, for the communities studied, being non-White appears to be related to both housing quality and satisfaction.

A second subjective indicator of satisfaction with housing is whether or not residents reported that they would move to a better dwelling if provided. Table 4 presents the results for this item.

[Table 4 about here]

As can be seen in the first section of Table 4, there is a relationship between race and a resident's indication that he or she would move to a better dwelling. This lends further support for the above findings relative to race and housing satisfaction. (Note: omitted from Table 4 is the relationship between house satisfaction and decision to move where $X^2 = 27.387$, 4 DF, $p < .0001$.) It is interesting to note in this same table that the physical appearance of dwelling shows no relationship to this subjective indicator, supporting

our earlier findings using the satisfaction variable.

The final set of variable to be discussed relate to other subjective reactions to living environment. Table 4 reports the relationships between the subjective indicator "would you move" and respondents' degree of community satisfaction (grouped as high, medium, and low). These data suggest that one's satisfaction with dwelling potentially influences one's satisfaction with community services and social environment. However, satisfaction with the physical environment does not seem to be influenced. It is possible that these findings are related to the unique aspects of the communities' physical setting. Both communities are located on a bayou near the Mexican Gulf in a very moderate climate. It is possible that housing characteristics may not be as relevant to the physical aspects (weather, proximity to water, etc.) as to the social or service aspects of community.

Table 5 provides some indication of potential relationships between housing variavles (both outsider and subjective evaluations) and community satisfaction dimensions and assessments of family situation. These preliminary findings suggest the possibility that housing satisfaction is correlated to community satisfaction but not to evaluations of family situation. Outsider housing scores, although showing some relationship to satisfaction with services, tend to result in low correlations with other subjective factors.

[Table 5 about here]

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the findings discussed here is still under way. However, our preliminary assessment of the data indicates that objective indicators of housing conditions do not necessarily correspond to resident subjective reactions to housing. If one of the goals of housing policy is to enhance citizen quality of life, it is apparent that simple objective measures of housing quality are insufficient. Although at the present time the development of generalizable indicators of housing quality seems distant, there are several general observations which may help us move in that direction. First, we should develop a set of complementary indicators based both on objective and subjective criterea. Second, our indicators should be quantifiable to the degree that they can be repeated with relative confidence of reliability. Third, any set of indicators should be sensitive to particular groupings of persons for whom housing has a particular impact. Finally, our methodologies should allow detection of trends or potential future problems.

Table 1. Objective housing characteristics, "outsider" ratings of housing conditions, and resident satisfaction with house

Objective House Characteristics		Mean "Outsider" Rating Scores $\bar{X}$(N)		Resident Satisfaction Scores $\bar{X}$(N)	
Convenience Items[1]					
Air Cond.	YES	3.15(143)	T=-5.744***	4.31(144)	T=.321
	NO	3.64(70)		4.15(71)	
Hot Water	YES	3.18(172)	T=-6.030***	4.31(174)	T=.114
	NO	3.85(41)		4.02(41)	
Cent. Heat	YES	3.00(82)	T=-7.851***	4.40(83)	T=1.586
	NO	3.51(131)		4.17(132)	
Type Residence[1]					
House		3.37(146)	T=-2.806**	4.31(147)	T=-1.498
Mobile Home		3.18(67)		4.15(68)	
Size and Crowding[2]					
Number Rooms		r = -.0948		r = .1968**	
Persons per Room		r = .2833***		r =-.1964**	

[1]Results for T-tests for differences between mean rating scores

[2]Zero order correlations with house rating scores

*P<.05
**P<.01
***P<.001

Table 2. Resident characteristics by satisfaction with home and "outsider" ratings of housing conditions

	"Outsider" Housing Ratings	Housing Satisfaction
Resident Characteristics		
Age[1]	.1293	.2132**
Income[1]	-.2560**	.0869
Education[1]	-.2101**	-.0513
Sex[2]		
Male	3.48	4.03
Female	3.28	4.30
	T = 1.49	T = -1.44

[1] Zero order correlation coefficients for housing scores
[2] Results for T-tests for differences between mean housing scores
* P<.05
** P<.01

Table 3. Percentages for satisfaction with house and "outsider" house ratings by race

SATISFACTION WITH HOUSE

	Very Sat.	Sat.	Less Than Sat.
RACE			
White %	65.9	25.6	8.5
(N)	(54)	(21)	(7)
Indian %	46.6	35.3	18.1
(N)	(54)	(41)	(21)
Black %	35.3	52.9	11.8
(N)	(6)	(9)	(2)

$x^2 = 9.488$, 4 DF, $p < .05$

"Outsider" House Ratings

	High	Med.	Low
White %	50.6	19.28	30.12
(N)	(42)	(16)	(25)
Indian %	17.24	39.66	43.10
(N)	(20)	(46)	(50)
Black %	5.88	29.41	64.71
(N)	(1)	(5)	(11)

$x^2 = 33.304$, 4 DF, $p < .0001$

Table 4. Percentage of residents who would move to better dwelling if provided by race, community satisfaction, and pictorial housing assessments

WOULD MOVE?	Race		
	White	Indian	Black
No	62.2(51)	47.4(55)	17.7(3)
Yes	37.8(31)	52.6(61)	82.3(14)

x^2 = 12.27, 2 DF, P<.01

	"Outsider" House Score		
	High	Medium	Low
No	62.9(39)	49.3(33)	43(37)
Yes	37.1(23)	50.7(34)	57(49)

x^2 = 5.78, 2 DF, P=NS

	Community Satisfaction (Services)		
	High	Medium	Low
No	42.9(44)	42.3(41)	71(24)
Yes	57.1(18)	57.7(56)	29(32)

x^2 = 14.33, 2 DF, p<.001

	Community Satisfaction (Physical Environment)		
	High	Medium	Low
No	61.4(35)	48(61)	41.9(13)
Yes	38.6(22)	52(66)	58.1(18)

x^2 = 3.93, 2 DF, P=NS

	Community Satisfaction (Social)		
	High	Medium	Low
No	61.7(58)	45.2(47)	23.5(4)
Yes	38.3(36)	54.8(57)	76.5(13)

x^2 = 10.84, 2 DF, P<.01

Table 5. Zero order correlation coefficients for housing, family, and community variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Sat. with house	-	-.1038	.1730*	.3619***	.2384***	.0527
2 "Outsider" House Score	-	-	-.1932**	-.0327	-.1215	-.0404
3 Community Sat. (Services)	-	-	-	.4358***	.5613***	.1095
4 Community Sat. (Phys. Envir.)	-	-	-	-	.4198***	.1258
5 Community Sat. (Social Envir.)	-	-	-	-	-	.0555
6 Family Situation	-	-	-	-	-	-

* $p<.05$
** $p<.01$
*** $p<.001$

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